

Sermon on Mount Dalhousie

An English Translation of:

“Pa’haaRhi Wa’az”

(Sermon on the Mount)–

**A discussion with the Christian Priest, Mr. Legson, of Dalhousie, India
(June 1911 A.D.)**



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Sermon on the Mount

One undergoes many such experiences in life which, if preserved in writing, can be very useful and may be a source of blessing for not only oneself but also for many other people. Sometimes even a seemingly insignificant experience leads to great outcomes and it results in such beneficial offshoots which prove to be a trailblazer for those who come to hear about it. Christians regard the *Sermon on the Mount*¹ as such a high-quality, profound, and full-of-wisdom exhortation which no other written text or scriptural material in the world can vie with it. And Christians have been reading it for more than nineteen-hundred years and they continue to marvel at its fine elegance and exquisite subtleties. One does not know what were the sentiments and the line of thought under which the Messiah ^{a.s.} [Jesus] may have uttered those words but, in according to the view of Christians—in the face of the dangerous and hazardous paths of the future, and in the dark recesses of one’s grave, and in the worrisome arena of the Judgment Day—this [Sermon] offers such a friendly support and guide by following which one can be protected against all kinds of anguish and hardships.

Recently, I visited a hill-station [Dalhousie] where I had the opportunity to have a dialogue with a well-known Christian missionary, who lives in Punjab. Since, in my view, the conversation I had with the missionary was of no less significance than the [biblical] *Sermon on the Mount* does for the seekers of the right-path [of Truth], and since the notable person I had a dialogue with was a Christian priest, therefore I thought I should entitle the narrative of this conversation, “Sermon on the Mount”. I hope that, in the context of the foregoing rationale, the Christian missionary will not be displeased with this title.

After performing the *As’r* prayer, my friends and I went for sightseeing from Dalhousie to Ballon, as was our wont. Later that evening, while returning home, we came across a Christian priest who was tall and sporting a long beard walking alongside the road. I started thinking: Who knows from how far this priest has come, and has cultivated what fond expectations, to this far-flung mountain! Thus it seemed appropriate to meet with him and laud the efforts he has undertaken. So I asked Sayyid Abdul Haye Arab, Maulvi Faazil, who was accompanying me at that time, to proactively approach the priest and say to him that we would like to meet with him

¹ The Sermon on the Mount is a collection of sayings of Jesus, found in the *Gospel of Matthew* chapters 5, 6 and 7, which emphasizes his moral teachings. [Translator]

at his residence; and we hope he will not be averse to it. The priest reacted with great pleasure and, thinking that we would prove to be an easy prey to Christianity, gladly approved of this proposed meeting. He pointed to the location of his residence below that of the Post Office and further added that, ‘You are free to come and meet me at any time you want.’

On the second or third day [of this chance encounter] we saw the Christian priest in the Dalhousie Market area, holding a big bundle of books, almost all of which were anti-Islam and were written with the singular purpose of ensnaring the ignorant and gullible among the Muslims and causing them to exit from the fold of Islam and join the flock of the sheep of the Messiah ^{a.s.} [Jesus]. When we met him, on this occasion, the priest gave us two booklets which contained slanderous attacks and aspersions on the religion of Islam and its holy founder. Upon reading these, I felt a great passionate reaction and thought that it was imperative for us to meet with the priest and resolve some significant issues.

Two or three days after this chance encounter, I managed to free up some time and, accompanied by two friends, went to meet with the Christian priest. We located the priest’s residence after half an hour’s search. It was situated at such a beautiful location and had such a pleasant view around it which reminded me the saying ²of the Messiah ^{a.s.} [Jesus], “*I tell you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.*” Dalhousie has very fine and sumptuous residences, and they are built at the choicest locations, but none had such a [comparably] magnificent location, and it is only the Mission’s mansion that can boast of being situated amidst such picturesquely beautiful scenery. Since Arab Sahib had met the priest on the first day, therefore he was asked to seek the priest’s permission to have a meeting. He was standing in his veranda and greeted us with polite and dignified propriety, and ushered us in. He sat us down in the meeting room and excused himself for a couple of minutes. When he returned, he started talking about random topics and the contemporary situation of Great Britain remained under discussion for a while. Meanwhile we learnt that the priest had been working for 35 years and he had served the Mission for a very long time at the locations of Gujrat, Wazir Abad, and Sialkot, and at that time he had been posted at Poona for about one year. The Christian priest’s name was Mr. Legson. Since many of the readers of this booklet—who live at Sialkot, Gujrat and Wazir Abad would be already familiar with him, [I would like to state that] just as we had heard

² See, Matthew 19:23. [Translator]

[from others] prior to the meeting, we did find the priest to be very polite in manners and soft-spoken.

After a bit of small talk, the priest diverted the conversation towards Christianity and intended to lead us into the great many benefactions Christianity had conferred upon Europe; but since we had a time-constraint therefore I requested the priest that, at the moment, we just wanted to ask some questions regarding the doctrine of Trinity. The priest gladly allowed us to do so.

Although this conversation spanned about two hours, but as much as possible I would like to write it down here in the same format of question-and-answer in which it had then proceeded. Since I had let the priest know at the outset that whatever I would talk to him about would be in the capacity of a Truth Seeker—and not as the follower of a specific religion—therefore, in the following record of that [question-and-answer format of] conversation, I would use the epithet of ‘Truth Seeker’ for myself.

Truth Seeker: Reverend, what are your views on Trinity?

Reverend: In my view, Trinity refers to “*Uq’noom*” [or Hypostasis³]*—one uqnoom* is ‘God-the Father’, one *uqnoom* is ‘Messiah [Jesus]-the Son, and one *uqnoom* is the ‘Holy Spirit’: and I believe that each one of these is ‘God’.

Truth Seeker: Reverend, what do you mean by “*uq’noom*”?

Reverend (with a smile): *Uq’noom* is a word of your language.

Truth Seeker: No doubt, it is a word of our language, but we do not use this word to refer to God the Exalted. Thus, when someone uses this word to refer to God the Exalted then we have a hard time grasping its meaning.

Reverend: I for one cannot propose any other word for this purpose.

Truth Seeker: If you cannot propose a word for it in Urdu or Arabic languages, then you might as well do that in the English language.

Reverend: In English, we use the word ‘Personality’ for this purpose.

Truth Seeker: I had once asked an American priest and he told me its meaning as ‘Capacity’.

³ *Uq’noom* refers to each of the three divine ‘persons’ or entities within the concept and belief of Trinity.
[Translator]

Reverend: No, no. Its meaning is ‘Personality’.

Truth Seeker: I neither understand the meaning of ‘*Uq’noom*’ nor of ‘Personality’. I would like to ask you this, explicitly. Please tell me: What is the respective status that each one of these three has? To start with, for instance: Who is the Creator of the world?

Reverend: As you know, ‘God is love.’ He has the element of love; and He wants to have something He can love; but everything in this world is ‘finite’; none of these [worldly] things is real in itself. Thus, it was essential for such an entity to exist who God could love. So, this was the need for the ‘Son’ to exist. And you, too, would agree that if there were to be no such entity whom God could love, then His [pre-existing] love would have gone to waste.

Truth Seeker: Reverend, you have said something that is quite rational. However, at the present moment, I only wish to understand ‘what Trinity itself is’—not the ‘need for Trinity’. My question simply was: *How* was this world created, and *who* created it?

Reverend: It was created out of the Word [*kalimah*⁴]; and God did it.

Truth Seeker: So, is it the case that the *Kalimah* ‘became’ the world—and this world is a part of this [*Kalimah*]-or, is it that God commanded it to ‘Be!’ and [as a result] the world came into being?

Reverend (smiling): Oh! It is not our belief that the world came into being from ‘nothingness’. This is the belief of the Aryas. Once an Arya met me and asked me: How did the world come into existence? How could an ‘entity’ originate from a ‘non-entity’? Most definitely, it is not our belief that ‘nothingness’ led to an ‘entity’. God issued a Command, “Be!” and [consequently] it came into existence: we do not believe that He commanded the ‘non-entity’ to become ‘something.’

Truth Seeker: Oh! You have answered well, and have expressed a subtlety. However, my question was: Was the world created by the *kalimah*, or was it the case that due to the Command of God, the world came into being?

Reverend: Yes; *kalimah* is the Messiah⁵. It is written in the Gospels⁶ [*Injeel*] that “*In the*

⁴ In the Urdu translation of the Bible, the word *Kalaam* is used, instead of *Kalimah*. See, *The Holy Bible in Urdu*, revised version. Printed in Great Britain, 1947; published by the British and Foreign Bible Society, Anarkali Market, Lahore. [Translator]

beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” This tells us that in the very beginning the Messiah [Jesus] was with God, and the world was created by the Messiah [Jesus]. In your religion Islam, too, the Messiah has been referred to as *Kalimah*. Would you like me to narrate for you something more concerning that?

Truth Seeker: I had told you at the very beginning that I have come to see you as a person in whose sight all religions are equal. And, although I am a Muslim but, at this time, I will speak to you in such a format as if all the religious faiths are presently under my research and review. Therefore, at this time, you ought to speak only from the perspective of the Bible. If I needed to research some aspect of the Holy Qur’an, I will go to a Muslim scholar: why would I need to approach a Christian priest for exploring any topic of the Holy Qur’an? Likewise, for the Vedas I will enquire from a Pundit; for the Holy Qur’an, I will ask a Muslim scholar, and for the Bible I will investigate [a topic] with a Christian priest. How can it be that I may approach a Muslim cleric to help me understand the Bible, and go to a Christian priest to help me comprehend the Holy Qur’an? So, at this time, please do speak in reference to the Bible.

Reverend (with a smile): Yes, indeed; your queries are in regard to the Bible. From the Bible, as I have stated earlier, one learns that the world was born out of the Word (*Kalaam*).

Truth Seeker: So then, Reverend! Why do you believe in Trinity? *Kalaam*⁷ is an attribute, whereas God has many attributes: He sees; He hears; He has transcendent-power; He is the Most-Knowing; He is the Creator. Why do you isolate the attribute of ‘*Kalaam*’ [i.e. the attribute of verbally articulating] to personify ‘God’? You ought to proclaim all the Divine Attributes to be “Sons of God”: according to your religious views, one cannot just have [the tenet of] Trinity

⁵ Strangely enough, although the Truth Seeker’s question was clear—“*Was the world created by the Kalimah, or was it the case that due to the Command of God, the world came into being?*”—but the Reverend’s reply seems indirect. Perhaps he purposely mixed up the *sifat* [attribute]—which is *Kalaam*, i.e. the faculty of speech—with the *mau’soof* [the person who possesses that attribute], i.e. the Messiah [Jesus] in this case. This is not permissible in any language and its grammar. For example, “surgery” is not identical with a “surgeon”—surgery is an “attribute” [a *sifat*], a skill, an ability, which the surgeon [the *mou’soof*] possesses. So, the Reverend’s statement, “*Kalimah* is the Messiah” is inadmissible. The ‘purpose’ latent in this ‘mix up’ is to try to argue that, “The Messiah [Jesus] created the world.” But the simple grammatical rules expose this inadmissible attempt. [Translator]

⁶ See, John (1:1), King James Version [Translator]

⁷ *Kalaam* is an Arabic word meaning: talk or talking; speech or speaking; conversation; word (s); remark, and language. [Translator]

alone to suffice.

Reverend: Oh, oh! You have made a mistake. Do you regard the discourse [*Kalaam*] of God to be identical with the discourse of humans? You, too, believe that God and human-beings are not identical. *Kalaam* [divine discourse] is not an ‘attribute’ [of ‘God’]. *Kalaam* is transcendent-power [*Qud’ret*].

Truth Seeker: Reverend! *Kalaam* is the means by using which we convey what is in our mind to another being. It is true that there is a lot of difference between God and us [humans]. He is the Creator and we are His creatures. But just as you declare a human-being’s faculty of seeing and hearing, and his knowledge as ‘human attributes’, so also you do declare the counterpart of these attributes in the case of God as the ‘Divine attributes’. Then what is the reason for you to term God’s attribute of knowledge, or His attribute of hearing as [Divine] ‘attributes’; but when it comes to His attribute of speaking then—just by arguing that “there is a lot of difference between God and human-beings”—you declare [God’s attribute of speaking, or] *Kalaam* to be an inherently different entity [unlike other Divine ‘attributes’]? You know that we issue a command from our tongue to Zaid, to come here: and he does come. This [*Kalaam* or speaking] is the way for us to convey to him what is in our mind. But we do not declare this speech of ours to be “a human-being” like us. Nor do we say that we [i.e. our speaking and we ourselves] are two distinctly different entities: one entity is *us*, and the other entity is *our speech*. And if we were to do that, and to declare our ‘speech’ to be an entity but to not declare our [attributes of] ‘hearing’ and ‘seeing’ to be respective entities, it would amount to giving preference to one over the other without having any [underlying] criterion or justification for granting such preference. Further, in regard to the specific *Kalaam* for the sake of which the world was created, why do you call that [*Kalaam*] to be ‘God’? Why do you not declare [the other instances of God’s *Kalaam*, e.g.] the Torah, the Gospels [*Injeel*], and other scriptures associated with Prophets, to be [also] ‘God’? But if you do not declare God’s attributes of hearing, seeing, and knowledge to be ‘God’ then at least by following the Gospel of John⁸ – “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...*”—you should declare the Gospels, the Torah, and other scriptures associated with Prophets, to be ‘God’.

Reverend (with a smile): No, no! We do not believe the Gospels or the Torah to be God. Such a

⁸ See, John (1:1), King James Version. [Translator]

notion is not permissible in our religion. And as for us, we do not regard *Kalaam* as an ‘attribute’; instead, we declare it to be an ‘entity’⁹.

Truth Seeker: So, then what is your understanding of what [the nature of] *Kalaam* is?

Reverend: [It is] Transcendent-Power [*qud’ret*].

Truth Seeker: You have stated, “We believe *Kalaam* [i.e. speech, or discourse] to be Transcendent-Power [*qud’ret*].” But you must remember that Power [*qud’ret*], taken by itself, is not a distinct ‘entity’. For instance, my hand possesses the power [or *qud’ret*] of holding this pen; and this power is subservient to my volition or ‘intention’: this ‘power’ does not possess any ‘knowledge’ within itself. When I order my hand to hold [this pen] then, as a result, it holds it. Using the same hand, I can hold the most beneficial or the most harmful objects. And, operating in pursuance of my knowledge and my intent, my hand will have to grab whatever item I order it to grab. For example, this particular object is lying in front of me, so I order my hand to grab it; therefore, operating under my ‘intention’, my hand grabbed that object. But, my hand’s *act of grabbing*, taken by itself, possesses no [inherent] ‘knowledge’. Thus, even if you give the name of Transcendent-Power [*qud’ret*] to the Messiah [Jesus], re-name and re-interpret *Kalaam* as ‘Transcendent-Power’ [*qud’ret*] even then the Messiah [Jesus] cannot be determined to be a distinctly different ‘entity’¹⁰. Otherwise [it is true that] everything has a certain measure of ‘power’ in it. Thus, [if one follows this line of thought, then] every ‘entity’ will have to be declared a case of ‘twin-entities’. Secondly, in this scheme of things, it would inevitably have to

⁹ Now the reader can transparently see the purposeful “mix up” between an ‘attribute’ and the ‘possessor’ of that attribute (e.g. between ‘surgery’ and ‘surgeon’.) previously pointed out in footnote-4. *Kalaam* (the faculty of speech) is an “attribute”, and if the Messiah [Jesus] is equated with the *sifat*, i.e. “attribute” (*Kalaam*), then the Messiah [Jesus] cannot be an “entity” (a ‘*wu’jood*’, or ‘*zaat*’). [Translator]

¹⁰ Transcendent-Power, or comprehensive capability, [*qud’ret*] is not equal to an ‘independent entity’. This is so because *qud’ret* is subservient to the composite of “knowledge + intention” (as illustrated by the Truth-Seeker through an example, above). [Translator]

be inferred that the Messiah [Jesus] was devoid¹¹ of ‘knowledge’ and of having ‘intent’ because, as I have already demonstrated that ‘Transcendent-Power’ [*qud’ret*] is completely subservient to the attributes of ‘knowledge’ and ‘intent’. In the case in point, the Messiah [Jesus] turns out to be completely subservient to God’s ‘knowledge’ and ‘intent’. And, someone who is a tool in the hands of the Most-Knowing [*Aleem*], Who possesses the Most Transcendent-Power [*Qadeer*]-and who of himself possesses no power independently-then such a one cannot be termed as God. God is indeed the only One Who¹² is the Most-Knowing [*Aleem*] and Who possesses the Most Transcendent-Power [*Qadeer*], and Who is completely free of all the defects and shortcomings and is also characterized by all the positive qualities.

Reverend: We do not regard the Messiah [Jesus] as devoid of knowledge: he is certainly the Most-Knowing [*Aleem*].

Truth Seeker: It is indeed true that you believe the Messiah [Jesus] to be the Most-Knowing [*Aleem*]; and although the Messiah [Jesus], as stated in the Gospels¹³ [*Injeel*] denies that he possesses knowledge but, for now, I am not interested in that: I will accept what you have just said. And since the Messiah [Jesus] is “God” [according to your belief] therefore that is how it must be [i.e. being *Aleem*]; but this is a matter that resides only in the realm of [your] belief; and as I have already stated, I am meeting you today as a person who has to review the beliefs held by people in general and, on the basis of that, he is going to decide which belief represents the truth. And since such a Truth-Seeker does not subscribe to any Book. Therefore it is essential

¹¹ For the convenience of the reader, an explication of this argument is given here in this footnote. The chain of argument runs like this:

If the Messiah [Jesus] = *Kalaam* = *Qud’ret*, then it implies that (being equated with “*qud’ret*”) the Messiah [Jesus] has no “knowledge + intention”: because, we have already seen that: *qud’ret* is subservient to (or is ruled by) the composite of “knowledge + intention”.

Thus, if “knowledge” rules over “*qud’ret*” [i.e. comprehensive capability] then “*qud’ret*”, as such, does not possess “knowledge”; similarly, if “intention” rules over “*qud’ret*”, then “*qud’ret*”, as such, does not possess “intention”. Thus, if Messiah [Jesus] is equated with “*qud’ret*”, then he is devoid of both “knowledge” (*Il’m*) and “intention” (*Iraa’dah*).

[Translator]

¹² If the Messiah [Jesus] is shown to be “devoid of *both* “knowledge” (*Il’m*) and “intention” (*Iraa’dah*), then it should be clear that the Messiah [Jesus] is only a “tool” in the hands of the One and Only God Who has full-knowledge (i.e. He is *Aleem*) and the One Who possesses full-intention to carry out whatever He wants (He is *Qadeer*). Thus, the Messiah [Jesus] cannot be taken to be ‘God’. [Translator]

¹³ See Matthew 24:36 – “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.” Also, see Mark 13:32 – “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. [Translator]

that only Rational Arguments¹⁴ are presented to such a truth-seeker. And, as I have already stated that if one were to believe that the Messiah [Jesus] was a *Kalimah* then: firstly, he is delimited to being an ‘attribute’ and secondly, he is shown to be devoid of knowledge. And since [in my pre-stated role as a Truth-Seeker] I can only benefit if a ‘rational argument’ is presented to me, therefore I can have either of the two options: either I will deny that the Messiah [Jesus] was *Kalimah*; or, accepting your statement, I will declare him to be *Kalimah*, but that he was devoid of knowledge.

Reverend: It is no doubt true that this is what [human reason and] rationality dictates, however the Bible does not accept this view.

Truth Seeker: Is it *impossible* to believe in Trinity on the basis of *rationality*?

Reverend: There can be no doubt that the faculty of human-reason cannot reach the ultimate essence of God’s existence.

Truth Seeker: Whereas God has made the [human] ‘faculty of reason’, or intellect [*‘aql*], as the one means of comprehension, then how can one accept anything as true, without [it receiving the corresponding affirmative support from] the faculty of reason? No doubt, there are certain matters which defy grasp by the faculty of reason, but there is no divinely-commissioned religion which coerces its followers to believe in non-rational tenets. I do share your view that it is not possible for the human faculty of reason [taken by itself] to fully comprehend the ultimate essence of God—because human intellect is finite and limited. However, it is imperative that the matters upon which rests the salvation of human-beings, these must fall within the compass of the human faculty of reason and intellect. Because, if some such matters are proclaimed to be the basis of human salvation which are non-rational then the door to salvation will be completely foreclosed for human-beings. For instance, it is most essential for human salvation to believe in the existence of God the Exalted, therefore the proof of His existence most definitely should be such that it does not run counter to the human faculty of reason. And we do observe that, due to a variety of factors, surely the faculty of human reason is inescapably poised to affirm belief in the existence of God. And, without it [i.e. without exercising the human faculty of reason] the nature and significance of God’s existence cannot be conceptualized by the human brain; for this reason the divinely-commissioned religions do not call this [i.e. the role of the faculty of human reason]

¹⁴ *Rational arguments* are those that are based on, and appeal to, a human-being’s faculty of reason. [Translator]

into question. But [in addition to the ‘existence of God’] the component of the ‘attributes of God’—since it was [humanly] comprehensible—therefore it was additionally narrated as well. Now, therefore, since according to your religion the doctrine of Trinity is the largest part of the basis upon which rests human salvation, therefore it was imperative for it to have been elucidated in a manner which the human faculty of reason could have understood.

Reverend: No doubt, this is what follows from the human faculty of reason; however, it is essential for one to believe in the Gospels [*Injeel*] before one believes in Trinity.

Truth Seeker: One would [naturally] believe in the Gospels [*Injeel*] if, first, the Principles of Christianity [including the doctrine of Trinity] have already been proven. Prior to resolving these issues [rationally], how can one affirm belief in the Gospels [*Injeel*]?

Reverend: As I have already stated, prior to affirming belief in the Gospels [*Injeel*], it is difficult to understand [the rational basis for] these issues.

Truth Seeker: Alright! Since you cannot resolve this matter on the basis of rationality, so at least tell me: Who is currently tasked with managing all the affairs of the world: ‘God’ the Father, or ‘God’ the Son?

Reverend: On the basis of the Gospels [*Injeel*], it is established that the task of managing all the creatures is assigned to the Messiah [Jesus], i.e. the Son.

Truth Seeker: So, is it that after creating the world through the instrumentality of the ‘Son’, ‘God the Father’ is now sitting idly by?

Reverend: No. It is not legitimate to believe that the Attributes of God may become suspended [or inoperative]. He is the one [i.e., ‘God’ the Father] who manages all the affairs of the world.

Truth Seeker: Just a moment ago, you *did* say that: It is the ‘Son’ who manages [all the affairs of] the world. Now, this statement [of yours] can be broken down into three scenarios: (1) One of the two (i.e. either ‘God’ the Father or ‘God’ the Son) is under suspension, while the other one is busy at work. Under this scenario, it would inevitably follow that the attributes of one ‘God’ are suspended—which is an inadmissible notion. (2) The second scenario is that the two of them have split up their work among themselves and work accordingly. In this scenario, it would inevitably have to be conceded that ‘one God is not capable of carrying the entire workload’: rather, either of them undertakes his own workload, apportioned to him. In this scenario, may God forbid, the

allegation is ‘proven’ that God is finite and subject to limitations. (3) Finally, if one alleges that both of them are individually performing the entire set of tasks [to manage the world], it would still lead to an objection that, God forbid, God is engaged in something inefficient [that has wasteful duplication of work].

Reverend: I have already told you that such issues cannot be grasped by human intellect; instead, one can comprehend these *after* one believes in the Word of God, the Gospels [*Injeel*].

Truth Seeker: When the fundamental principles are not [rationally] comprehensible, then how can we even recognize the Gospels [*Injeel*]? And, since you concede that the issue of the doctrine of Trinity runs counter to human faculty of reason and intellect, therefore we should take leave of you now, because any further discussion [on this topic] seems pointless. We had several other issues to discuss but for that we will have to come at another time.

Reverend: Human reason cannot give definitive answer in regard to [the existence of] God. Our principle is that of “Atonement” [or Redemption] and this is what we lay emphasis on. I hope you will come another time to talk about this issue as well.

After promising to [possibly] reconvene, we departed from the Christian priest and returned home and for quite a while we remained perplexed at the replies given by the Reverend to our questions.

